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# FUTURE PUNISHMENT.

BY

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## INTRODUCTORY NOTE.

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THIS brief discussion was prepared at the request of the editor of "The Congregationalist," as a series of articles for that journal. The length of the articles was prescribed in the application. No thought was then entertained by the writer himself of embodying them in a more permanent form. But the request has come from the same quarter, as well as from other sources, that they should be so gathered up. They have accordingly been revised for the purpose, with modifications here and there, intended chiefly to make portions of the argument more complete, and some of the points more obvious. It was not thought best materially to increase the length of the argument. There are advantages, and there are disadvantages, in so brief a discussion. The chief advantage, and the one which preponderated in the present case, is the greater probability of being read. It is eminently important at the present time, that the Church and the community should have access to some compact statement of the Scripture teachings on this solemn subject, and the reasons why those who accept the binding authority of the Scriptures are constrained to the belief they hold.



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# FUTURE PUNISHMENT.

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## CHAPTER I.

### THE BASIS OF THE DOCTRINE.

**I**T is not surprising that the question of future retribution should come up anew from time to time. In any great uprising and conflict of religious opinion, it is very sure to rise to the surface, not alone by reason of its intrinsic magnitude, but because the mode of solving it indicates the character of the religious system. This one bone tells the nature and habits of the whole body.

Great suffering is not only terrible to endure, but painful to contemplate. The Saviour wept when he pronounced an irrevocable sentence on Jerusalem. God said to certain rebellious sufferers, "Oh that thou hadst hearkened!"

Let, now, that great suffering be endless: let it be a penalty: let it be a penalty which at some time impends over every member of our race: and it is not strange, it is rather to be expected, that a large part of the race would, at all hazards, resist both

the fact and the announcement. That so many men who have the strongest inducement to set it aside are constrained to admit the fact, clearly indicates the strength of the evidence.

The considerations which naturally influence unbelievers, and even some believers, to resist such a teaching, are obvious enough. And it would be well to remember what one of the keenest of free-thinkers has said concerning men's rejection of unwelcome truth. "I doubt not," says Hobbes of Malmesbury, "if it had been contrary to any man's right of dominion, or to the interest of men that have the dominion, that the three angles of a triangle should be equal to two angles of a square, that doctrine should have been, if not disputed, yet by the burning of all the books of geometry suppressed, so far as he whom it concerned was able." And a greater than Thomas Hobbes has said, "This is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil."

Whatever, therefore, might be the proof of so formidable a doctrine as this, it was absolutely sure to be strenuously resisted. We could confidently anticipate all possible opposing theories: that John Murray should maintain the final restoration of all men; Thomas Whittemore, their immediate blessedness after death; H. L. Hastings, the complete extinction of the wicked; one obscure writer, their everlasting decay without complete extinction; Thomas Starr King, the entrance of all men on much the same condition hereafter that they left here. It is not sur-

prising that all these theorists should make some reference to the Scriptures. It is not strange, also, that some should have said sturdily, with the late Theodore Parker, "I believe that Jesus Christ taught eternal torment : I do not accept it on his authority ;" nor that others should have declared more circuitously, that "the letter of the Scriptures" asserts eternal punishment, yet their "spirit" contradicts it. And, if there be any other mode of denial, we might confidently look for that also. Indeed, we have been earnestly warned by a large class of writers, that this one supposed teaching of the Bible is the chief reason why the Bible is rejected by many sceptics, — by "millions," says Mr. Jacob Blain. We can easily believe it. Nothing is more natural and probable. The doctrine is too portentous to make its way, except against more strenuous opposition than almost any other truth encounters. And whenever a "new departure" is made in religion, whether by rationalists on the Continent, "advanced thinkers" in England, or American rejecters of a redemptive work by Christ, we always know that this doctrine of endless punishment will be among the first to go overboard.

Let it be conceded, and remembered too, that, in the present condition of the race, a vast amount of human sympathy and human *interests* set against the doctrine. With many men it has no chance of a hearing. C. F. Hudson declared that the assertion of it "tends to a rejection of the Bible ;" while others of his school pronounce it an impossibility, and even a sin, to believe it.

How, now, shall this matter be settled? The inquiry admits but one answer: *the fate of the wicked is a simple question of fact; all questions of fact are determined by evidence; that evidence must be either direct knowledge or competent testimony.*

It is of no avail, therefore, to appeal to our sympathies, feelings, anticipations, wishes, predilections, or prejudices, even though we may dignify them by the name of "impulses of the heart," "divinely implanted instincts," "holiest emotions of the soul," or what not. The unbending course of *fact* in the universe, under the government of the wise and holy God, is daily travelling athwart these so-called "impulses," "instincts," and "emotions."

The fact in question, too, is one which involves the decision and action of God himself, and that in apparently the most complicated subject, and greatest emergency, of his realm. It would seem futile to the last degree for any man or men to attempt to settle by speculation, inference, or instinct, what, in that unfathomed and portentous emergency, will be *God's action.*

No man so knows even his fellow-man. Great Cæsar could not know one hour in advance the deed either of the "envious Casca," or the "well-beloved Brutus." The combined wisdom of Europe could not anticipate the doings of the first Napoleon, whether upon the whole continent, or on the battle-field; nor could he, up to the hour of his overthrow, fully anticipate the fate that crushed his "destiny." Or, take a case just at hand. A distinguished preacher, who has

lived in the gaze of the nation for a quarter of a century, is suddenly arraigned before the nation.\* On *any* theory of his case, is there a man in the nation who is not amazed at some admitted facts of his course, and who would not have pronounced them "impossible"? If we cannot speak for our fellow-men, how idle to speak for God, and in the emergencies of his kingdom! It would seem as though no language could express the folly of such a claim. The only testimony that can determine what God will do must be God's own testimony. All other is worthless.

That testimony, we believe, is found in God's word, the Bible. Leave that out of account, and no man can tell, for no man living knows, the slightest fact concerning the untried future. It is to all men alike what John Sterling called it,—the "great darkness."

To the Scriptures, then, we go. With those who do not admit the Scriptures, it is useless to argue. We might indicate how the race generally has apprehended penalties hereafter for sin; but that is not *evidence*. The positive argument is essentially and only a Scripture argument. It is noteworthy how many of those who deny endless punishment openly or virtually bid farewell to the Scriptures, or lay down principles which wholly override them.

What, then, will constitute a clear proof from the Scriptures? Perhaps the following conditions fully cover the case:—

\* The trial of Rev. Henry Ward Beecher was in progress as these articles appeared.

1. The proof should not rest upon forced or strained constructions, but upon declarations obvious to "plain people," and taken in accordance with the common laws and usages of speech.

2. It should be found not in one or two, but in repeated, and it may be numerous, assertions.

3. It should be expressed not alone in some one mode of speech or phraseology, but in several and diverse forms of statement.

4. Besides incidental allusions, it should rest upon direct and principal utterances, in which this topic constitutes a chief matter in hand.

5. In addition to particular declarations, it should be sustained by the general implications and concurrent tenor of the system of truth in which it is found.

6. It should be opposed by no passages which do not admit of an easy explanation without conflicting with this doctrine.

7. It should encounter no objections of principle which do not lie equally against the manifest order of things in the present course of nature.

It will probably be admitted that a showing from the Scriptures, which should meet all these conditions, would form as strong a case as is ever made on a question of law, constitution, history, or, in fact, any question that rests upon a documentary basis. Such an argument might recognize the existence of some difficulties and objections, and still remain unanswerable.

Do all these conditions hold good concerning the

Scripture doctrine of endless punishment? We think they do; and we invite the reader to judge for himself, as we proceed to indicate the nature of the proof.

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## CHAPTER II.

### ITS RELATIONS TO THE GOSPEL SCHEME.

IT has been shown already that this subject of future punishment, being purely a question of fact, must be determined either by personal knowledge or by testimony. But since no man has knowledge, or can give testimony, God is the only witness. His testimony is in the Scriptures. We have indicated the points of an unanswerable argument from the Scriptures. One of those points was, that the direct declarations of the doctrine should harmonize with the general tenor of the system in which it is taught, so that it finds there a legitimate and consistent place.

The doctrine of future endless punishment has often been attacked and defended as an isolated doctrine. The express testimony of the Scriptures, clear and strong as it is, fails of its proper impression when viewed only in this way.

How, then, does this doctrine stand related to the whole New-Testament system of truth? Does it stand there as an "excrescence," as some have pleased to term it? Or does it fully comport with the other high and solemn utterances of God to man?

It closely links itself to all the other cardinal points of that system, as they are taught in express language, and comes re-enforced with all their weight. They hold together and bind each other like the stones of an arch. The Scripture moves on in one consistent, unbroken stream, from beginning to end, in its view of God, his character, government, and requirements; of man, his duty, his sin, his opportunity, his danger, and his doom. It is not a matter of single texts and sudden turns, but a steady march of portentous truth in one solemn strain to a mighty issue. The inconceivable gravity of the sinner's case is never lost sight of.

I. The character always ascribed to God gives weight and point to his threat. God is holy. Evil shall not dwell with him. He hates all workers of iniquity. Without holiness no man shall see the Lord. The pure in heart shall see God. Our God is a consuming fire. He says "Depart from me, ye workers of iniquity." If we say that we have fellowship with him, and walk in darkness, we lie. Thus the Bible labors throughout to impress us with the inconceivable purity of God, and the greatness of his recoil from sin, and from all that cling lovingly to sin. And, even when his glorious attribute of love is presented, it is never otherwise than the *discriminating* love that goes out in sympathy with the holy, and withdraws from the sinful; nay, which declares that it will protect holiness and the holy by the overthrow of the sinful. There is not a word in the Bible which conflicts with the summary statement, "The righteous

Lord loveth the righteous ; but the wicked his soul hateth." It is remarkable how steadily God's assurances of love and blessing for the good, and of opposition and ruin to the wicked, accompany and balance each other ; and the latter is even made the guaranty of the former. Except by some radical change, it would seem clear that God and the sinner can never dwell together in peace.

2. Equally to the point is the Bible estimate of sin and sinners. Throughout the Scriptures sin is that which separates man from God, shuts off God's favor, insures his displeasure and indignation, and entails his heavy punishments. The sacred volume reverberates with God's "wrath" against sin and sinners. It uses no mincing words nor hesitant phraseology, makes no palliations, admits no excuses for sin ; but pours out upon it one long and steady rolling fire of reprobation and abhorrence. God and sin are at eternal antagonism. Forgiveness is never hinted at except on abandonment of sin. Sentimentalism shudders at the stern speech with which the Bible denounces sin, and thinks it bitter and fierce. Noon and midnight are not more opposite than God's view of sin as an evil and bitter thing, and the view of Theodore Parker, that it is but "an incident of development," or any view that treats it lightly. So long as that quality exists, God's displeasure toward it, and those who practise it, will continue. The full expression of that displeasure at last, in whatever mode, will be heavy pressure on the sinful soul.

Nor will it avail to say that this displeasure is only

towards the sin, and not the sinner. No such separation is made in the Bible, nor can be made, in fact. It is not the iniquity, but the "*workers* of iniquity," against which God's threats are directed; not wickedness, but "*the wicked*, shall not be unpunished." In truth, sin has no separate existence: it is the act and quality of the sinner sinning, and nothing else. Sin can be dealt with, whether by God or man, only by dealing with the sinner.

3. Entirely in harmony with the doctrine of penalty, is the Bible estimate of the greatness of human ruin. It represents fallen man to be dead in sins. He is at enmity with God. He is a child of wrath. The wrath of God abideth on him. He is without God, and has no hope. He cannot see the kingdom of heaven without a new birth, a birth from above. Such words seem to very many persons harsh words. But that only shows the difference between divine and human estimates. For these are all Bible words, and some of them Christ's words. Indeed, the Saviour spoke, if possible, still more strongly. He told some of his hearers that they had both seen and hated both him and his Father,—hated him without a cause. He told others, "Ye are of your father the Devil." In one recorded instance, after four times pronouncing a "Woe unto you," charging them with being full of hypocrisy and iniquity and of all uncleanness, he closes with this startling address: "Ye serpents, ye generation of vipers, how can ye escape the damnation of hell?" These things may not tally with popular notions and sentimental

pictures of Christ, any more than does the doctrine of final retribution ; but they show how the Scriptures in this respect fully harmonize with themselves, — how they recognize a class of persons between whom and God there is utter and hopeless conflict. The two cannot get on together in peace.

4. The greatness and strangeness of the remedy provided for that ruin points with equal distinctness to the greatness of the danger, and the fearfulness of the impending fate. Slight evils demand slight precautions. Great impending calamities call out mighty, and sometimes almost superhuman, efforts of escape. But, to deliver men from the woe of sin, the Scriptures allege not merely a superhuman, but a super-angelic device. They present an effort to save, so stupendous and unparalleled that it wholly transcends many men's belief. They pronounce it incredible, impossible, — the same men usually who deny the doom. It is indeed a procedure so amazing, that, had the whole human race been challenged to devise a remedy, it is not supposable that one of them should have thought of this ; or that, thinking of it, he should have dared to propose it, — the astounding humiliation of the Son of God. But the remedy renders credible the doom, and the doom the remedy. They go together. How can a man who accepts the marvellous method of redemption set forth in the Scriptures for a moment doubt the terrible magnitude of the fate for which the Scriptures declare this the only remedy ? Here, again, the word of God is consistent with itself.

5. Entirely in keeping with the declarations concerning the doom of sin, is the extreme urgency with which this redemption is pressed upon sinners. These utterances seem to many just as strained and extravagant as those concerning God, sin, ruin, redemption, and punishment. The Saviour closed his Sermon on the Mount with a series of solemn warnings to beware of the broad way that leads to death, the guidance of false prophets, the doom of the corrupt tree, the final rejection of false professors, and the fate of the foolish builder. He charged men to sacrifice the dearest objects, — foot and hand and eye, — rather than be cast into hell-fire. He asked with startling emphasis, "What is a man advantaged, if he gain the whole world, and lose himself, or be cast away?" Men must be willing to abandon every thing, lose their life even; and never fear those that could destroy only the body, but him who can destroy both soul and body in hell. And he sent his followers forth to lives of toil and suffering and certain martyrdom, like his own, that their fellow-men might be saved. They, in turn, counted not their lives dear, but held themselves ready to be offered. It was their steady strain, "As though God did beseech you by us, we pray you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled unto God;" "How shall we escape if we neglect so great salvation?" "Knowing the terrors of the Lord, we persuade men." "Be thou faithful unto death," is the injunction that has come down the whole history of the Church, around which have gathered countless sufferings and deaths, and matchless toils and self-

denials, for human salvation. If, now, the consequence of unrepented sin be what the same Scriptures declare, we can understand the intense urgency of these words and deeds. Such wholesale sacrifices of life and every thing that this life holds dear, and the *universal* requisition to be ready to do likewise for the salvation of ourselves and our fellow-men, would seem justified only in view of some most appalling alternative. And, in fact, those who deny the alternative have, in general, seemed little inclined to make the sacrifices.

6. Entirely corroborative of the same view is the constant exhibition of two great and startling contrasts of human condition and relationships. There is no penumbra here. The word of God knows but two alternative spiritual conditions of mankind. "We are of God," says John, "and the whole world lieth in wickedness." The entrance of faith into a sinful soul is the introducing of an element wholly wanting before, creating a revolution of moral affinity. The one condition is light, the other darkness; the one life, the other death. The one is spiritually minded, which is life and peace; the other carnally minded, which is death. The only alternatives in prospect are to be saved, or to be lost. The gospel itself becomes to some a savor of life, to others a savor of death. The chief corner-stone is made also a stone of stumbling. This great dividing-line is indicated in a variety of modes: such as, on the one hand, sons of God, heirs of God, children of God, vessels of mercy prepared unto glory; and, on the other hand, children

of this world, children of disobedience, children of wrath, even "children of the Devil," vessels of wrath fitted for destruction. No words could more strongly express God's view of the gulf that separates them. Now, all these phrases and assertions seem to many persons very harsh. They dislike them, and they deny them ; and they very naturally deny the opposite retributions which go along with these opposite spiritual states and relations. They are consistent in their way. And the word of God is entirely consistent with itself in its very different way. It asserts two fundamentally, and in many cases permanently, opposite characters, and two fundamentally opposite destinies corresponding with them.

7. To the same effect is the constant Scripture limitation of eternal life,—doubly restricted. First, there is no rescue, no help or hope for man, except through Christ's work. "There is none other name under heaven, given among men, whereby we must be saved ;" "By His blood he obtained eternal redemption for us." And, now that redemption is procured by this Lamb of God, another limitation perpetually restricts its saving effect to the believer. God "gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life." This is the key-note of the New Testament. One class only shall be saved: "He that believeth shall be saved." All others are expressly excluded: "He that believeth not shall be damned." And this limitation and exclusion steadily appear as a finality. The one class "have their fruit unto holiness,

and the end everlasting life," while "many walk whose end is destruction."

Such, briefly indicated, is the harmony of the whole scheme of the gospel with its doctrine of retribution. Those who are dissatisfied with this doctrine are quite apt to be ill content with other of the characteristic features of the gospel; and, when they begin to reject one, they or their successors quite commonly find it necessary to reject or question or remodel the others. Abundant examples, both general and individual, could easily be given, were it necessary.

But in all these things the word of God is self-consistent. Its doctrines concerning the holy God, the evil of sin, the greatness of human ruin, the strangeness of the divine remedy; the urgency of its appeals and methods, the two grand alternatives in human condition and prospects, the rigid limitation of eternal life, — all point to a doom of sin great and terrible, inconceivably terrible.

And here comes in the more explicit teaching that this doom is endless.

### CHAPTER III.

#### THE DIRECT PROOF.

WE have found it to be the firm and steady tenor of Scripture, that the consequence of rejecting Christ is to the last degree disastrous. All its chief teachings converge to this point. But, furthermore, its direct assertions pronounce that doom to be endless.

Probably there are few persons, if any, who have not at some time wished it were otherwise; who would not rejoice to learn that the infinite Sovereign had provided, or would provide, some method whereby he could secure all the ends of his government, and the highest interests of his realm, without that penalty. They accept the doctrine simply because he has clearly and positively revealed it. They have no option in the case. They hold themselves bound to submit to God's government, and to deal honestly with his word. They see also, that, if all men were willing to obey God, then this doctrine would have no terror. They may, or may not, perceive some of the necessities of God's government. But they fully confide in his wisdom, his righteousness, and his love; and they equally confide *in His truth*.

To present in full God's testimony on this subject,

cannot be attempted in so brief a discussion. It will suffice to indicate the line of evidence, and point out its validity. The testimony will be seen to be plain, abundant, various, fundamental, and uncontradicted, either in the Scriptures or in nature. It is assumed that the punishment consists in conscious suffering; a view against which nothing has been urged but a forced interpretation of certain figures, and single words or phrases, which is inconsistent with the ascertainable meaning of these figures, words, and phrases elsewhere in the Scriptures. And, for the present purpose, it is unnecessary to distinguish between the fate of lost men and of lost spirits, inasmuch as the New Testament (Matt. xxv. 41) expressly couples them together.

The main features of the evidence have been recognized (they could not be mistaken) by the Church in all ages. The facts are not new.

1. In some five different passages at least (Rev. xiv. 9-11, xix. 3, xx. 10; Jude 13; 2 Pet. ii. 17), the punishment is "for ever," or, in an intensified form, "for ever and ever." The attempt has been made to embarrass this testimony by citing certain other different uses of one part (*aiōn*) of the compound phrase. This does not touch the case. Without spending time to trace out all the uses of the single word (which in Plato and Aristotle includes strict eternity), it is enough to say that the phrase, as a whole, has a settled meaning. Its shortest and essential form is *Eis aiōna*, sometimes with the article, sometimes in the plural, sometimes (in the New Testament) reduplicated

for emphasis. I think no scholar will deny that this phrase, whether in classic Greek (Diodorus, Lycurgus, Lucian, &c.), or in New-Testament use, is substantially identical with, and as unambiguous as, our English phrase "for ever," or, as Passow also gives it, "to all eternity." It would be of no avail to say that the separate word "ever" has other uses (e.g. "ever faithful;" "do you ever go"), that the whole phrase may be sometimes misapplied (e.g. "he is for ever meddling"), or that its intent is sometimes frustrated by the course of events, as a conveyance to one's "heirs and assigns for ever" may fail to find heirs and assigns in the next generation. Just so no other relations of the separate word *aiōn*, and no inadequate or frustrated applications of the whole phrase, can unsettle the undoubted meaning of the Greek phrase, which corresponds as nearly as possible to our "for ever," and "for ever and ever." As matter of fact, the duplicated form (for ever and ever) occurs twenty-two times in the New Testament, eighteen of them relating to the continuance of the perfections, glory, government, praise, of God and Christ (thus "the wrath of God, who liveth for ever and ever," Rev. xv. 7), one to the happiness of the righteous, and the other three to the punishment of the wicked. Any man can see the force of such a fact.\* The shorter phrase (for ever) is used thirty-

\* That the reader may see for himself, the passages are subjoined. References to God and Christ: Gal. i. 5; Eph. iii. 21; Phil. iv. 20; 1 Pet. v. 11; 1 Tim. i. 17; 2 Tim. iv. 18; Heb. xiii. 21; 1 Pet. iv. 11; Rev. i. 6, 18, iv. 9, 10, v. 12, vii. 12, x. 6, xi. 15, xv. 7.

To the happiness of the righteous: Rev. xxii. 5.

To the punishment of the wicked: Rev. xiv. 11, xix. 3, xx. 10.

five times ; eighteen of them concerning God, Christ, and the Comforter, (thus “ Jesus Christ the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever ”) ; nine concerning the blessedness of the righteous ; five miscellaneous, with the manifest idea of unlimited duration ; and three times concerning the punishment of the wicked.\* This also is intelligible to every capacity.

2. In one of the passages referred to above, the positive assertion is exchanged for a sweeping, eternal negative. The blasphemer against the Holy Ghost (Mark iii. 29) “ hath never forgiveness,” or, exactly, hath not forgiveness for ever. With a noticeable accumulation, the same verse also declares the penalty “ eternal ;” and the parallel passage in Matthew draws it out in detail, “ neither in this world (*aiōn*), nor in the world to come.”

3. Equally unambiguous, whatever may be insinuated to the contrary, are those instances in which the punishment is pronounced “ eternal ” (*aiōnios*, Matt. xviii. 8, xxv. 41, 46 ; Mark iii. 29 ; 2 Thess. i. 9.) Attempts have been made to throw doubt upon the meaning of *aiōnios* (eternal). But, to go no further, the very intelligible fact meets us, that, of seventy-one instances of its use in the New Testament, fifty-one relate to the life and blessedness of the righteous ; two

\* Applied to God and Christ, &c. : Rom. i. 25, ix. 5, xi. 36, xvi. 27 ; 2 Cor. xi. 31 ; 1 Pet. i. 25 ; 2 Pet. iii. 18 ; Luke i. 33 ; John viii. 35, xii. 34, xiv. 16 ; Heb. v. 6, vi. 20, vii. 17, 21, 28, xiii. 8.

To the prospects of the righteous : John v. 24, vi. 51, 58, viii. 51, 52, x. 28, xi. 26 ; 2 Cor. ix. 9 ; John ii. 17.

To the punishment of the wicked : Mark iii. 29 ; 2 Pet. ii. 17 ; Jude 13.

Miscellaneous : Matt. xxi. 19 ; Mark xi. 14 ; John xiii. 8 ; 1 Cor. viii. 13 ; 2 John 2.

to God and his glory ; six to miscellaneous subjects, with the seemingly plain meaning "everlasting ;" and six, or perhaps seven, to future punishment.\* Three instances referring to the past (Rom. xvi. 25 ; Tit. i. 2 ; 2 Tim. i. 9) ; are understood by Alford, Ellicott, and Cremer to indicate past eternity ; by others, the past ages of the world. But, in its *future* references (some sixty-eight), there is no instance in which it can be shown to have a limited meaning. It is *everlasting* (Jude 7, and Philem. 15 are probably no exceptions). Indeed, in some cases this meaning is expressly unfolded ; as in Matt. xviii., where *aiōnios* is found, while in the parallel passage, Mark ix. 47, 48, the doom is described in detail as one that never ceases.

4. In one well-known and remarkable passage (Matt. xxv. 46), the same epithet (*aiōnios*) is applied in immediate succession to the punishment of the wicked, and the life of the righteous. They are co-eternal. Several ingenious efforts have been made to escape the pressure of this fact. Perhaps the least successful is one of the latest. It has been said, that "in its scriptural and philosophical meaning" the

\* Applied to the life and blessedness of the righteous : Matt. xix. 16, 29, xxv. 46 ; Mark x. 17, 30 ; Luke x. 25, xvi. 9, xviii. 18, 30 ; John iii. 15, 16, 36, iv. 14, 36, v. 24, 39, vi. 27, 40, 47, 54, 68, x. 28, xii. 25, 50, xvii. 2, 3 ; Acts xiii. 46, 48 ; Rom. ii. 7, v. 21, vi. 22, 23 ; 2 Cor. iv. 17 ; Gal. vi. 8 ; 2 Thess. ii. 16 ; 1 Tim. i. 16, vi. 12 ; 2 Tim. ii. 10 ; Tit. i. 1, iii. 7 ; Heb. v. 9, ix. 12, 15 ; 1 Pet. v. 10 ; 2 Pet. i. 11 ; 1 John ii. 25, iii. 15, v. 11, 13, 20 ; Jude 21.

To God : Rom. xvi. 26 ; 1 Tim. vi. 16.

To future punishment : Matt. xviii. 8, xxv. 41, 46 ; Jude 6 ; and probably Heb. vi. 2.

Miscellaneous uses : 2 Cor. iv. 18, v. 1 ; Heb. ix. 14, xiii. 20 ; 1 John i. 2 ; Rev. xiv. 6. These last six cases all seem to carry the meaning "endless."

word *eternal* "has nothing to do with time at all, is outside of time, is simply spiritual; the idea of duration is not connected with it" (*Rev. J. F. Clarke*). If this be intended as a statement of fact concerning the usage of this term (*aiōnios*), nothing would seem to be more arbitrary and erroneous. For (1) the notion of duration, onflow, seems peculiarly inherent in the word. Thus Liddell and Scott (sixth edition) give *only* these definitions: "lasting for an *aiōn*, perpetual, everlasting, eternal." Passow gives only, "long-continuing, everlasting, eternal;" and Cremer assumes that *aiōn* "denotes an age from the point of duration." (2) In one of the highest of Plato's "philosophical" discussions ("Timæus," p. 38), amid whatever metaphysical difficulties of expression and conception, he repeatedly uses *aiōnios* interchangeably with *aidios* (everlasting); and Jowett translates both alike "eternal." (3) The Scriptures speak of "eternal times" (Rom. xvi. 25; 2 Tim. i. 9; Tit. i. 2). (4) The word (as in Matt. xviii. 8) is interpreted in parallel passages as strictly involving duration. (5) The objector may be safely challenged to produce one instance in the New Testament in which he can show that the idea of duration is excluded from *aiōnios* or *aiōn*. No doubt the things that are eternal also have other qualities, as this is true of the eternal God, the everlasting gospel, the eternal life, the everlasting covenant, the eternal Spirit, everlasting praise, eternal redemption, an eternal inheritance, everlasting habitations, an eternal weight of glory; but the attempt to *displace* the idea of duration from the word has no more legiti-

mate foundation in the Greek *aiōnios* than it would in the English "eternal." If it be said that the word is "intensive," we answer it is also *extensive*.

When, on the other hand, Rev. T. S. King affirms ("Two Sermons," p. 28), "I have not the least faith that the passage from which this text is taken [Matt. xxv. 41-46] points at all to a future world," he also shows how difficult and opposite are the devices to escape the obvious meaning of a plain passage.

5. Still another word for "eternal" (*aidios*) is used in Jude 6 ("reserved in everlasting chains under darkness unto the judgment of the great day"); in regard to which two things may be observed: (1) that such lexicons as Passow, Liddell and Scott, ascribe to it no other meaning than "everlasting;" (2) that *its only other usage* in the New Testament is concerning "the eternal power and Godhead" of Jehovah (Rom. i. 20.) So in Plato's "Timæus," "the everlasting gods" (*aidioi*). The fact is singular and startling.

6. In some instances the statement is further varied by declaring that the punishment will never end. In Mark ix. 43 we read of the "unquenchable fire" in "hell;" and again, in verse 48, it is, in reduplicated figurative phraseology, "where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched."

7. In other passages we read of complete and final exclusion from the life of the righteous and the presence of Christ. "He that believeth not the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God abideth on him" (John iii. 36). "Ye shall die in your sins: whither I go ye cannot come" (John viii. 21). They

"that obey not the gospel" are to "be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord when he shall come to be glorified with his saints" (2 Thess. i. 7-10).

8. It is repeatedly and pointedly declared in the most absolute terms, that certain classes of men, comprising in general "the unrighteous," shall not inherit the kingdom of God (1 Cor. vi. 9, 10; Gal. v. 19-21; Rev. xxi. 27).

9. At another time the condition of the wicked after death is pronounced irreversible, and his joys are past. The utterly selfish rich man who "died, and was buried, and in hell lifted up his eyes being in torment," is told, "In thy lifetime thou receivedst thy good things: now thou art tormented; and, besides all this, between us and you there is a great gulf fixed, so that they which would pass from hence to you cannot, neither can they pass to us that would come from thence" (Luke xvi.). It is difficult to see how any distinction made between *hades* and *gehenna* can break the force of this plain statement, that the doom of the wicked after death is irreversible and hopeless. Indeed, that distinction, should it be pressed, only makes the case more formidable; for if even in *hades*, before the resurrection and the judgment, all help and hope are so utterly excluded, how shall it be in *gehenna*, after the resurrection of the body, "the resurrection of damnation," and the final judgment?

10. In one remarkable passage, restored by modern textual criticism, we find asserted the eternity of the

sin or guilt that attends the doom. "Hath never forgiveness, but is in danger of [subject to, held by] an eternal *sin*," (Mark iii. 29). This is the reading adopted in the four great critical editions (of Griesbach, Lachmann, Tregelles, Tischendorf) as well as by such expositors as Meyer, Alford, Wordsworth, Lange. "Eternal," says Meyer, "in reference to its guilt;" or, in the words of Alford, "unremitted forever."\*

11. The final condition of the wicked becomes thoroughly hopeless. "It were good for that man [Judas] if he had not been born" (Matt. xxvi. 24). "An expression," says Olshausen, "of the deepest abandonment, of utter perdition, — so strong that it intimates the exclusion of *every hope*; for the winning of eternal life, no matter how late, must assuredly render it a blessing to be born." Again: in a certain case "there remaineth no more sacrifice for sins, but a fearful looking for of judgment and fiery indignation, which shall devour the adversaries" (Heb. x. 26, 27).

12. An end of opportunities to gain the friendship and blessing of Christ is very positively asserted. There comes a time when they that are ready go in to the marriage, and the door is shut (Matt. xxv. 10); when the Lord's money is called for, and the un-

\* This passage cannot safely be quoted as asserting the eternity of the process of sinning. That would be unambiguously expressed by a different construction, the use of a verb. It is thought not best, however, to encumber this brief discussion with further remarks on this point, and some others related to it. Enough that the text, should it mean more, cannot mean less, than we have indicated above.

profitable servant is cast into the outer darkness (verse 30); a time when the master of the house rises, shuts the door, says, "Depart from me, ye workers of iniquity; and there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth when ye shall see Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob in the kingdom of God, and you yourselves thrust out" (Luke xiii. 24, 30); a time of separation of the sheep from the goats (Matt. xxv. 31), of the tares from the wheat (xiii. 30), of the good fish from the bad (xiii. 48), of all that do iniquity from the kingdom of God (verse 42), of the wicked from the midst of the good to cast them into the furnace of fire (verses 49, 50); a time to cut down the bad tree, and cast it into the fire (Matt. vii. 19); a time of destruction from the presence of the Lord (2 Thess. i. 9). Many will seek to enter in, and shall not be able (Luke xiii. 24); and there is reason to "fear" and to "labor," lest, a promise being left, any man should come short and fall (Heb. iv. 1, 2). The rich man's brethren were to be warned while on earth, lest they come into the place of torment (Luke xvi. 29). Many other equally explicit statements could be cited.

13. Finally, not only is there no hint that probation is unlimited, but there are positive assertions of its termination. The destiny of men is declared to be decided in this world. "Whosoever shall deny me before men, him will I also deny before my Father which is in heaven" (Matt. x. 33). "Whosoever shall be ashamed of me and my words in this adulterous and sinful generation, of him also shall the Son of

man be ashamed when he cometh in the glory of his Father with the holy angels" (Mark viii. 38). "We must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that every one may receive the things done in the body, whether they be good or bad" (2 Cor. v. 10). "It is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment" (Heb. ix. 27). The judgment is steadily spoken of as a finality: it is "the day of judgment and perdition of ungodly men" (2 Pet. iii. 7). The resurrection is but twofold, — a "resurrection of life," and a "resurrection of damnation" (John v. 29).

Not the least significant circumstance in regard to this array of testimony is, that many of these strongest assertions were made by the Lord Jesus Christ in person; and they were made in the presence of men who as we know, and as he well knew, believed in future punishment. His words could make on them but one impression. If all men are saved, which was he, deceiver, or deceived?

The reader, who will now cast his eye thoughtfully over the lines of proof here indicated in outline, may judge whether they do not fulfil the specified conditions; namely, that the evidence is found in declarations which (1) require no forcing or straining, but are plain and obvious; (2) which occur not in one or a few, but in numerous instances; (3) which are made in many and diverse modes of statement, resting on no particular word or set of words; (4) and which are direct and principal utterances upon the theme in hand. We had previously found (5) that they are in

entire harmony with the system of teaching of which this doctrine forms a part.

It does not often happen, surely, that a proposition resting on documentary evidence presents a chain of testimony so full and explicit. If the Book itself be valid authority, it would seem that little could be added to the strength of the case. What forms of speech can state it more expressly? An honest believer in the binding force of the Scriptures would seem to be bound to accept this doctrine, unless met by equally explicit counter statements from the same book, or by insuperable objections or impossibilities outside. One would almost think, too, that objections weighty enough to disprove this doctrine must go further, and shake our confidence in the authority, or at least the intelligibleness, of the Scriptures themselves. We will look at the objections, scriptural and ethical.

## CHAPTER IV.

### OBJECTIONS FROM SCRIPTURE.

THOSE who deny the doctrine of endless punishment have labored more to disparage the positive evidence of the Scriptures than to advance counter statements. The alleged scriptural objections may be divided into two classes: first, declarations cited as though bearing directly on the subject; second, general references to what is called "the spirit of the Scriptures." The second class being really no other than ethical objections, the present article will confine itself to the former.

There has been considerable fluctuation in the citation of passages for universal salvation. In 1840 Thomas Whittemore presented a hundred "scriptural evidences." But they included a multitude of texts which only declare, in a general way, God's love and mercy, and which require no attention in this discussion. Comparatively few passages are now cited by the more skilful advocates of universal salvation; and some of them, as we shall see, admit that no specific passages clearly assert their view.

We will, however, look at a few texts that have been, or might be with most plausibility, cited, or that

might possibly raise a question in an inquiring mind. They are few and vague. In most instances hardly a word of comment is needed to show how entirely they fail to meet the precise point made.

It is necessary only to allude to those passages in which Christ is called generally the Saviour of the world, or in which his coming is ascribed to God's love for the world; since the actual results of his salvation are, often in the same passages, restricted to those who believe on him. The redemptive work is ample, the offer universal; but obviously "all men have not faith."

Similar is the passage, "God, who is the Saviour of all men, specially of those that believe" (1 Tim. iv. 10). The passage carries its own explanation. As Olshausen puts it, God has opened to all the possibility of eternal life, but in believers alone is the purpose accomplished; offered to all, accepted by believers. In like manner, Christ was a ransom for all, tasted death for every man, and was a propitiation for the sins of the whole world: in other words, the provision is amply sufficient for the whole race. This is all that is here said.

Another text cited expresses God's desire, or choice, in the matter: "Who will have all men to be saved, and come to the knowledge of the truth" (1 Tim. ii. 4). The Greek for "will" is *thelei* — wishes, desires, or chooses, even. Probably we cannot overstate the strength of God's desire and choice, that all the wicked should break off their sins. God "has no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but that the

wicked turn from his way, and live." He has "no pleasure in the death of him that dieth," *that actually dieth* (Ezek. xviii. 32, xxxiii. 11). The Scriptures thus compel us to recognize the distinction between even God's strong preferences, and his executive determinations. That all men *will* be saved, is another thing. They certainly do not all come to the saving "knowledge of the truth."

Some have referred to John xii. 32: "And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me." But this is too brief and unexplained to build any definite theory upon. It certainly says nothing explicit, either of conversion or final salvation. Is the "drawing" that of conversion, or of religious privilege, or only of absorbing attention and interest such as we now witness in both believers and unbelievers? And is the "all" here a strict universality, or as in the statement "all men seek for thee" (Mark i. 37), "all Judea," "all Jerusalem"? Or is it (with De Wette and others, from the connection) Gentiles as well as Jews, or (with Lange) the totality of the nations in antithesis to the firstlings of the Gentiles? The rationalist De Wette very properly adds to his exposition, "But we must here understand those who are susceptible."

Rev. James Freeman Clarke has selected the five following passages from the New Testament. The reader will observe how the strongest of them lack in *definite* bearing upon the question at issue.

In Eph. i. 9, 10, we read of God's purpose, that in the "dispensation of the fulness of times he might

gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven, and which are on earth, even in him." The word is to "sum up," or as some say, more questionably, bring under one head. The subject is the whole creation (*ta panta*), "all things and beings," say the commentators. Christ is to be the centre of all; "but," says Bengel, "of every thing according to its nature." And Alford adds, "The Church [will be] subordinated to him in the highest degree of conscious, joyful union; those not his spiritually, in mere subjugation, yet consciously; the inferior tribes of creation, unconsciously; but, objectively, all are to be summed up in him." This is not only all that the passage demands, but including, as it does, "all things," it is all that it admits. There is not a word of the conversion and final salvation of all men here, although Christ shall be the glorious central object of the universe.

Somewhat akin to this is Col. i. 19, 20, where we are told, "It pleased the Father that in him should all fulness dwell, and, having made peace through the blood of his cross, by him to reconcile all things unto himself; by him, whether they be things in earth, or things in heaven." If this passage affirmed that all sinful beings would actually be reconciled to God by Christ, it would precisely meet the case. But it announces the Father's pleasure or design to place all fulness in Christ (the previous verses dwell emphatically upon *his greatness*), so that he should be the centre and source of all reconciliation in the universe. The detailed results of this great reconcilia-

tion are not given, except as, in the following verses, the apostle declares it to have taken effect on the Colossian Christians, but on this condition: "if ye continue in the faith." Olshausen (whom Mr. Clarke, for obvious reasons, prefers to quote) says that this statement "must be understood of the *tendency* of the atonement. That resistance is made to the comprehensive design of grace by a portion of the creatures, is a point which is not here regarded by the apostle."

And here it is proper to introduce this commentator's remarks also upon Eph. i. 10. Mr. Clarke ("Truths and Errors of Orthodoxy," p. 387,) quotes him in part, as saying that the defenders of universal restoration "understand the harmony of the universe seriously, in its literal meaning, and seem, according to that, to be here in the right." But Olshausen goes on thus: "Certainly, taken in their isolation, the two passages cannot be explained otherwise. But the interpreter has the task not merely of explaining isolated passages, but also of elucidating the separate passages from the general tenor of the ideas of the writer (of course, without encroaching on his individuality), in connection with the expressions of the primitive Christian doctrine in all the writers of the New Testament. According to this, it may perhaps be affirmed that Paul is the writer in the New Testament, who touches on the doctrine of eternal damnation most rarely, leaves it most in the background, and contains most expressions, which, considered *per se*, seem to teach a general restoration. Still we cannot say that he *teaches* that doctrine de-

cidedly ; partly because he nowhere enunciates it outright, but always in such a way that we are only led to it by inference ; partly because other writers of the New Testament, and especially in the Gospels our Lord himself, so expressly maintain the contrary. Now, as regards the two passages (Eph. i. 10 ; Col. i. 20), it might be the most simple plan to make the meaning we obtain from them harmonize with the general doctrine of the Scriptures, by putting prominently forward in the infinities *ἀνακεφαλαιώσασθαι, ἀποκαταλλάξαι* (*the purpose of God*), which, in the establishment of that redemption which is furnished with infinite power, tends to the restoration of universal harmony, and to the recovery of all that was lost ; so that the sense would be the same as in the passages, ‘God will have all men to be saved,’ ‘He has given himself a ransom for all.’ But, that through the unfaithfulness or wickedness of man, this purpose is not fulfilled, and that many men are not benefited by it, is a subject which the apostle has no occasion to put forward.” We have quoted at length, to show how fully Olshausen concedes that not even in these favorite passages, and “nowhere” does the apostle “enunciate outright” universal redemption. But Olshausen had been selected for quotation, evidently, because of his bias towards the doctrine of a final restoration of all men. Meyer, holding close to the phraseology, understands this passage to mean, that at Christ’s coming all anti-Christian natures will be separated out of “heaven” and “earth” (into hell, as he says elsewhere), so that thenceforth nothing in

"heaven and earth" will be excluded from this gathering together. Nothing in the language forbids this interpretation.

Another passage is Phil. ii. 9, 10, where Christ is to be so exalted that "at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven and things in earth, and things under the earth, and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord." Paul uses almost this identical language to describe the triumph of Christ, when "all shall stand before the judgment seat of Christ" (Rom. xiv. 10-12). It designates, therefore, his complete ascendancy over all things and beings, whether willing or unwilling. Olshausen (or Wiesinger) remarks, "Jesus is not here acknowledged as Mediator, but as *Lord*; and the true interpretation of this passage, as also Rom. xiv. 11, shows that it is not a willing acknowledgment of Jesus that is here spoken of."

Another text cited, similar but more indefinite, is 1 Cor. xv. 28, where "all things are subdued unto him" and "put under him." Says the author who cites it, "This cannot mean a forced submission." Why not? especially when, three verses before, the writer makes this very transaction include "putting his *enemies under his feet*."

Another of the five texts is 1 Cor. xv. 22: "As in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive." No passage, perhaps, has been so often cited to confute the steady assertions of eternal punishment in the Scriptures, as this: we will therefore consider it a little more in detail.

The sole plausibility of the objection so elicited lies in isolating the passage from the context, severing it from the argument, and forcing an unnecessary and here unwarranted meaning upon the words.

It is a principle of judicial, as much as of scriptural interpretation, that, in case of ambiguous or uncertain phraseology, the context and the scope must decide. But (1) no intelligent reader (or unintelligent) can fail to see that the whole *argument* that includes this passage (verses 12-23) solely concerns the resurrection of the body. Mr. Barnes says, beyond the seeming possibility of contradiction, "That is the main, the leading, the exclusive point. He is demonstrating that the dead would rise. His argument therefore requires him to make a statement *on that point*, and that only." (2) To the same effect also the very last words of the preceding *context*, — "since by man came death, by man came also the *resurrection of the dead*." Then follows the specific justifying statement of the text concerning *this* death (decease), and *this* resurrection or "making alive," — how the two take place. (3) This is all that the *language* itself requires, or naturally carries. The Greek word "make alive" is applicable indifferently to a physical or a spiritual restoration of life, but is actually applied in the New Testament more commonly to the former. Thus Cremer: "For the most part in the New Testament [it is used] of raising the dead to life." Instances of the physical meaning are to be seen in Rom. iv. 17, viii. 11; John v. 21 (twice); 1 Cor. xv. 36; apparently 1 Tim. vi. 13; 1 Pet. iii. 18.

Not only, therefore, can no man insist on finding here the spiritual restoration of all men, but, on the contrary, the great current of opinion among the chief expositors and lexicographers unhesitatingly asserts that only the resurrection is spoken of in this text. "Life and death," says Alford, "are here physical death, and the rescue from physical death." So also Meyer, DeWette ("probably"), Olshausen, Bloomfield, Lange, Barnes, Bengel, Calvin. So the lexicographers Schleusner, Robinson, Wilke, Cremer.

The only consideration that seems to have perplexed some minds is that the resurrection should be connected with Christ. But this is in accordance both with the constant general reference of the whole economy of this world to the charge of Christ as king, redeemer, judge; and with the special statement that all that are in their graves "shall hear the voice of *the Son of man*, and shall come forth" *to their twofold resurrection* (John vi. 28, 29). As death came "in [connection with] Adam" (*De Wette*), so even the resurrection "in [connection with] Christ." "The wicked shall be raised by the power of Christ as their Lord and judge, the righteous by virtue of their union with him as their head" (*Valpy*).

The utmost, then, that is required, or perhaps even permitted, to find here, according to the great body of eminent expositors, is the simple assertion of the general resurrection.

But we may go further. If with Hodge, Rueckert, and some others, we were to understand (contrary to the connection) spiritual life and death (as in Rom.

v.), even then two important considerations would prevent our finding here the doctrine of universal salvation. (1) The whole chapter confines itself to the case of Christians. The prospect of the unbeliever does not for a moment come within the apostle's purview. Here is no word of hope for him. (2) Another restriction lies in the very terms of the comparison. In the Greek, as in the English, and more clearly, the apostle in this verse makes the *emphasis* of the correlation rest upon the "as" and the "so," — the method or agency, Adam and Christ. As Adam is head and fountain of the whole line of death, so Christ of the whole line of life. As to all his children Adam brings death, even so to all his children Christ brings life. Indeed, the special emphasis upon the mode, or agency, makes the "all" so subordinate and comparatively unimportant, the two "alls" might be the very same parties as affected respectively by their relations to Adam and to Christ.

If we now look still further at this "as" and "so," and ask, *How* is it? there is nothing here for Universalism. Admit, for argument's sake, that the death and making alive are the deeper death and life. But *how* do men reap spiritual death in Adam? Only as they personally participate in sin ("for that all have sinned," Rom. v. 12). "*Even so*" — by personal participation in Christ's work through faith — shall men be saved, and so only. Here is nothing whatever to conflict with that utterance, "He that believeth not the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God abideth on him."

It hardly admits of doubt, that the former exposition is the true one ; but in either case, so far is this text, when fairly treated, from implying universal salvation, or offering any relief from the doctrine of endless punishment. And, to prove directly that no such thought entered the apostle's mind, we have but to look three verses farther along (1 Cor. xv. 25) to find him describing this risen Saviour as reigning "till he hath put all *enemies* under his feet." Enemies, then, will still exist, and that too in a condition of overthrow and abject humiliation ; for such is the only scriptural meaning of the phrase, "put under the feet." (See Josh. x. 24 ; Ps. cx. 1.) And this is to be the state of things in "the end when he shall have delivered up the kingdom to God, even the Father" (verses 24, 25).

Olshausen, after affirming that "it cannot be denied, that, if the restoration is sanctioned in any passage, it is in this," finds himself constrained honestly to warn "the defenders of the doctrine" in his next sentence, "that neither here nor in any other passage of the sacred Scriptures, is the final recovery of all evil men expressed openly, and in a definite form."

The same writer who cites these five texts (Mr. Clarke) thinks, however, the parable of the prodigal son "perhaps the strongest evidence of a universal restoration." This would seem to us a confession of the entire absence of such evidence from the Scripture ; for the reader will search that parable and the context in vain for one hint of any rescue of the sinner after the present remedial dispensation. It

simply sets forth and justifies, in answer to the "murmuring" Pharisees, the Saviour's joyful readiness in this world to receive "publicans and sinners" on repentance.

In addition to these passages, some writers appeal to 1 Pet. iii. 19 (the preaching to "the spirits in prison"), as intimating a probation after death. But (1) when and where was the preaching? in the prison, or at the time of Noah? (2) What was the preaching? the offer of forgiveness? (3) What was the effect? universal repentance? (4) Will the transaction, whatever it was, be repeated? Here every thing that would bear on the question is left strictly *unknown*.

Some other passages perhaps might be added; but it will probably be admitted, that, if the statement of universal salvation, or restoration, is not found in these, it is not found anywhere. But surely it is not here; not in any one nor all of them. The precise thing sought is precisely the thing not found. They are perfectly consistent with the opposite doctrine. They do not require the slightest pressure to make them conform. Nothing is adduced which for a moment *permits* us to accept the theory of universal salvation against the plain, explicit, numerous, and varied assertions of eternal punishment. If the case be weak, the Scriptures make it so. The explicit statements, and that too in great numbers and variety, are all on one side.

As matter of fact, the wisest and most scholarly advocates of universal salvation seem to surrender the

point so far as direct teaching in the Scriptures is concerned. The American Unitarian Association in their annual report for 1853 (p. 28), while avowing that the majority hold Restorationist views, also say, "It is our firm conviction that the final restoration of all men is not revealed in the Scriptures, but that the ultimate fate of the impenitent wicked is left shrouded in impenetrable mystery so far as the total declaration of the sacred writers is concerned;" it is with them "a warranted inference from the cardinal principles of Christianity, as well as from the great verities of moral science." In 1858 Rev. Thomas Starr King said in his printed discourse (p. 5), "I freely say that I do not find the doctrine of the ultimate salvation of all souls clearly stated in any text, or in any discourse, that has been reported from the lips of Christ." He only finds that the received doctrine is "opposed to the principles of the religion of Jesus;" and deems it necessary to re-enforce his position still further by the statement that "the New Testament is not given as a full and accurate theological chart for human thought." The scholarly De Wette, who asserts (on Matt. xxv. 41, 46) that "the hell-punishment occasioned by sin cannot be eternal," adds that "the eternity of it lies in the literal sense" of the passage. And again (on Matt. xii. 31, 32) he remarks, "That the eternity of hell-punishment is asserted in our text, will be admitted only when we are obliged to take the declaration of Jesus with verbal exactness." These are grave admissions. One of the most recent advocates of Universalism

constantly states the opposing argument as an appeal to "the letter of the Scripture."

The reader may now judge whether the condition (No. 6) of this discussion is not fully met, — that "the doctrine of endless punishment is opposed by no passages of Scripture which do not admit of an easy explanation."

It may not be improper to show in what spirit the testimony of the Scriptures is sometimes approached. Rev. James Freeman Clarke writes thus: "If all the churches in the world tell me that Jesus teaches everlasting punishment inflicted by God for the sin of men in this world, and produce chapter and verse in support of their statement, I reply, If I have learned any thing about God from the teachings of Jesus, it is that your assertion is impossible. We should hold it less dishonorable to God to deny his existence than to believe this doctrine concerning him" ("Truths and Errors of Orthodoxy," p. 364). Rev. T. S. King says, "It is utterly impossible for a man to believe in an infinitely perfect Ruler of the universe, if he believes that a never-ending penalty has been established by that ruler for all those who pass out of this life unreconciled to his will" (sermon, p. 7.) He quotes Dr. Dewey thus: "This system [endless punishment] cannot be proved to be true, till nature and life and consciousness are all proved to be false." These assertions from such writers render it needless to quote still more intense statements from men less favorably known.

But when we approach any matter that rests on

evidence, declaring in advance that the thing "is impossible," "cannot be proved," and that sheer atheism is preferable to the reception of it, where are we? What, then, is reasoning or reason? Surely we then but play with dice, and the dice are loaded.

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## CHAPTER V.

### ETHICAL OBJECTIONS.

MANY who are constrained to admit that "the letter of the New Testament," that is, its express declarations, teach endless punishment, yet contend that "its spirit" contradicts the assertion. When they explain themselves, they appear to mean the paternal character of God, who is revealed in Christ as a God of love. To this, it might be enough to reply, that the Father and the Son are competent to speak for themselves, and especially in the very volume from which alone we learn the brightness of the Father's character, and the fulness of Christ's love. If their teachings are valid for the one, they are valid for the other. It is vain to say (as did Mr. King), that the Gospels are "fragmentary" and "poetic," and the epistles "passionate and rhetorical." They contain Christianity as Christ and his disciples taught it,—all the Christianity there is.

But some men have taken ground that this doctrine is so repugnant to God's character and our moral sense, that it cannot be proved; it is impossible to accept it; atheism is better.

Now, to say that this cannot be proved, is to talk at

random. Nothing is impossible to prove by competent testimony, unless it conflicts with self-evident truths. A self-evident principle is one which men are obliged to recognize or to assume. That no such principle resists this doctrine, is clear from the fact that such multitudes of the best men — shall we not say the majority? — have steadily received it. That it does not conflict with any necessary inference from first principles, is seen in the fact that such a mass of the best reasoners, as well as best men, have held it. All assertions of the “impossibility” of proving it, or accepting it, must be set down as declamation. The American Unitarian Association, in 1853, were much wiser in saying only, that their theory of universal restoration was to them “a consistent speculation of the reason, and a strong belief of the heart,” “a glorious hope which seems to them a warranted inference from the cardinal principles of Christianity, as well as from the great verities of moral science,” although it “is not revealed in the Scriptures.”

But we cannot accept even this mild form of statement. The real question is this: the Scriptures themselves being our authority on “the cardinal principles of Christianity,” and our clearest light on “the great verities of moral science,” has this teacher of the verities proved so unveracious, or so self-contradictory, that we are obliged flatly to put down its direct and steady assertions of future punishment, by force of its general principles? For we are not making “inferences” in the absence, but in the presence of the Scriptures. Are we compelled to “restrain any

passages,"—as Hosea Ballou, Senior, said he "should feel justified" in doing,—compelled violently to "restrain" one great class of utterances, in order to save the righteousness and truth of this great teacher of righteousness and truth? Must we save the Bible from itself *by rejecting its statements?*

We are so far from being brought to this dilemma, that, when we examine the objections in detail, we find, that whether men recognize the Bible, or a God without a Bible, or a mere "course of things," their objections against eternal punishment cannot be maintained. They are clearly invalid, because in conflict with admitted facts and unquestioned principles.

The paternal character of God is announced in his own word, side by side with the steady declaration, that after this life he will sit as judge, and will certainly restrict the blessings of eternal life to his loving "sons." And, when appeals from future punishment are made to the loving heart of Christ, they encounter the formidable fact, that the Saviour not only dealt forth the severest woes upon sinners, but that he is confessedly the person who has uttered this doctrine of eternal punishment in the sternest forms.

Do we say that *any* paternal heart would relent in sight of such protracted misery, even though it accompany equally protracted sin, we assume not only that God values happiness more than holiness, and that even God can make sin happy,—which is more than we know,—but we overlook the most obvi-

ous state of things. In this world there are sufferings which so overcome the heart of a human father, that he would arrest them instantly if he could. Yet such sufferings as make us faint and sick to see, God sees in millions of instances all the time ; and he has been looking upon them for several thousand years. They are largely, some would say wholly, the fruit of sin. Now, whether men assert this to be because God will not, or cannot, or cannot consistently, prevent it, the argument founded on God's paternal feeling is, in either case, clearly destitute of foundation. A principle that does not hold good in this world is worth nothing for the future world. And especially the belief, that suffering will cease till sin ceases, is in direct contradiction to our experience of God's doings here.

It may be affirmed that the sin will cease. Some men declare that God's omnipotence will insure it. This, again, is talking at random. Other men, with equal positiveness, aver that it does not fall within the sphere of omnipotence to change all human wills. At all events, the Bible intimates that omnipotence will not change all human wills ; and the solemn fact steadily meets us, that, so far as we can trace men to the verge of the other world, it actually does not. If it be alleged that all men will of themselves repent, this, again, is not only a gratuitous statement, but it contradicts known present facts and *tendencies*. Many men grow manifestly less inclined to repentance and obedience, the longer they live. So far is it from being true, that penalty always breeds penitence, that very

often, the more completely the misery of sin accumulates, the more desperate becomes the sinner. The incapacity of repentance, so to speak, increases with the sin. No valid evidence can be found to show that it will not continue to be forever as when men "gnawed their tongues for pain, and blasphemed the God of heaven because of their pains and sores, and repented not of their sins." Remorse and repentance are very different things.

Some writers insist that the eternal continuance of sin and suffering is derogatory to God; it limits his sovereignty, his love, his wisdom. If that were true, then the condition of things for several thousand years already has been derogatory to God. The inexplicable, confounding fact is the admission of sin and suffering at all into this universe, when God is on the throne. Plainly there must be some good reason for it, although the objectors would doubtless have pronounced it "impossible," but for the plain fact. And since, in spite of all possible objections, there is good reason for its permission, that man must claim more than omniscience who affirms against Scripture that there can be no good reason for its continued permission. Dr. Whately well says, "Those who set at defiance the plain and obvious sense of Scripture by contending for the final admission to eternal happiness of all men, in order to get over the difficulty by this means, and to reconcile the existence of evil with the benevolence of God, do not, in fact after all, when they have put the most forced interpretation on the words of the sacred writers, advance,

one single step toward the point. For the main difficulty is not the *amount* of evil that exists, but the existence of *any at all*. I will undertake to explain to any one the final condemnation of the wicked, if he will explain to me the existence of the wicked. The thing cannot be explained. All we can say is, that, for some unknown cause, evil is unavoidable." The impossibility of denying its existence in the past and present creates an impossibility of denying it for the future.

To this consideration, one very peculiar reply has been made. "Limited and finite evil in this world or the other is no philosophical difficulty, and for this reason: that finite evil, when compared with infinite good, becomes logically and mathematically *no* evil." (*J. F. Clarke*.) A reasoner must be hard pressed when he finds himself compelled to deny the *intrinsic* evil of sin; a position equally in conflict with God's word, and with fundamental morality.

Are we told that a good reason will justify its permission many thousand years? Then, we say, a good reason will justify its permission indefinitely. Is it replied, there can be no good reason for its permission forever? This is to assert wholly in the dark,—and the more so that sin *is* permitted now, and we know not why. Such assertions are purely worthless. They deserve no respect.

Is it still affirmed to be inconsistent with justice, that such dire and permanent consequences should follow a short life of sin, often thoughtless and simply heedless? Bishop Butler long ago answered this un-

answerably. The complaints must be brought not alone against the Bible, nor indeed against God, but against the actual course of things, in which just such methods constantly and abundantly find place. Short transgressions sometimes bring lifelong disadvantages and sufferings. Slight-seeming sins cause huge disasters. Reckless, and even merry acts are attended with the gravest and saddest of issues. Opportunities of recovery pass irretrievably. One sin drags others, sometimes a whole train of sins and miseries, not seldom a lifelong final fall into sin and misery. The first free choice of vice often has determined a permanent free choice—and yet slavery—of vice, on which all dissuasions were lost. To insist that what has constantly thus taken place will be abolished at all hazards hereafter, is to talk without reason.

Two things also are to be remembered which are sometimes overlooked: first, that the sin continues coeval with the doom; and, second, that sinning will still be the sinner's determined choice. Just as here a vicious sufferer desperately clings to his evil course, notwithstanding all its penalties, actually accepts the situation, positively and sometimes angrily resisting all efforts to reform his character and his lot, so will it be substantially there. And without assuming, with some reasoners, that it is not even a function of omnipotence to revolutionize a human will, one thing, doubtless, may be safely said,—that the opponents of God may, and probably will, become so opposed to his wishes, that they would with all their power resist

and resent the effort of omnipotence to make them holy.

It is sometimes alleged, as an *argumentum ad hominem*, that the knowledge of sin and suffering would mar the happiness of heaven. Individuals peculiarly related are asked, "Could you be happy in heaven if this or that friend were cast out?" But the solution of this problem is not difficult. And, first, we must admit that God's perfect happiness is not now imbittered by the sight of the inconceivable sin and woe which he sees. Clearly, then, could we be brought to view these things just as God does, it would not imbitter our existence. And God will bring his children into full harmony with himself. But, further and more particularly, the difficulty can be removed by the well-known facts of human life, some of them certainly sad enough. (1) Human happiness is not necessarily destroyed by the knowledge of others' misery. Nothing could be more untrue. The world is full both of happiness and of known misery, contemporaneous. (2) It often and abundantly happens that the known sufferings of men's former intimate friends do not poison their happiness. Separation, indifference, coldness, entire and final estrangement, or even bitter enmity, often gradually, sometimes suddenly, replace intimacy. Can it be necessary to give examples, when the newspapers are filled with them in their extremest form,—divorces between those for whose fondness language had been insufficient, bitter and fatal feuds between near relatives and once dear friends? But, still further, when the one party

holds fast his integrity, and the other, against all love, entreaty, and warning, with obduracy and perhaps at length with harshness, bitterness, and injustice, breaks away in settled, hopeless sin and suffering, how often has it been the case that the long-suffering wife, father, or mother, after having exhausted all possible efforts in vain, has turned resolutely and calmly forward in the path of duty, and found it still the path of peace! Regrets still follow the wanderer, but the life's happiness is not blighted forever. We have known cases in which the final withdrawal of the obdurate transgressor from the scene of life has brought rather relief than additional anguish to the exhausted heart. Even in this life the love of right and the sense of justice can, and do, rise high enough to overcome every personal consideration arrayed directly against them. Here, perhaps, is the clew to the whole solution. It is no doubt a sad solution. But sin is an evil and bitter thing.

The singular trial\* now before the country and the world is a marvellously apt illustration. I have nothing to say of the merits of a pending case. God defend the right! For lessons of instruction, the case is public property.

See, then, the intimacies that lie wrecked before the world. The pastor and his favorite disciple, who loved him "next to his own father," stand in deadly struggle day after day. The trusted, God-sent friend, who had in his hands documents apparently for the defendant's more perfect safety, produces them for his

\* The trial of Rev. H. W. Beecher.

ruin. The husband and wife, whose published letters of love are almost beyond precedent for intensity of expression, are not only, to appearance, separated forever, but the one sits quietly by day after day, while the other, of set purpose and plan, goes over all the past history of their relations, including even the narrative of whatever was once most delightful, in the full knowledge that this voluntary and determined testimony of his, if accredited, will destroy the whole earthly prospects of his friend, and the whole earthly welfare of his wife. Now, whether this be mere malignity and recklessness, as his opponents would claim, or the stern necessities of his situation, and the paramount demands of right and justice, as he and his friends would claim, it is a lesson never to be forgotten. It shows how the most sensitive souls at length rise triumphantly above all merely natural sympathies and personal considerations. And, when the alleged demands of justice to himself and his dependent children can *compel* the husband and father to vindicate himself by crushing his nearest friend and his once beloved wife, let the men that justify such a course pause, and consider what the righteous exigencies of a dependent universe may compel the holy God to do to his perpetual, persistent, and open foes. To some men this ought to be a revelation, if they accept no other.

It may be said that the fear of punishment is not a high motive. Certainly not. Nor is it a wrong motive. It is in moral character indifferent; but it is a great restraining power, and a

motive of which both God and man seem necessitated to make use. The reason is, that some men will not respond to high and strictly holy motives, and therefore cannot be addressed by them. And furthermore, whether the motive be high or low, the fact itself is one of such tremendous import that the wrong of concealing it would equal the folly of disregarding it.

The foregoing are the chief outside objections which are urged against the Scripture doctrine of endless punishment. But we trust it has been sufficiently shown that there are none of them which do not press with equal force against the present order of things. That is, we actually and inevitably pursue our life and lot under just those conditions which the objectors complain are inadmissible; under just such a God, or just such laws, or just such forces (whatever they please to call it), as they pronounce impossible. The solid and solemn facts of existence crush out their theories. The universe, out of which there is no escape, allies itself with the word of God against them. Not an objection is raised which can stand before the facts and principles of our common lot.

Here arises a question, however, which sometimes almost assumes the form of an opposition to the Scripture teachings,—the question, *How* will God punish? Literalist, or, rather, materialist notions have passed away, and ought never to have arisen. The variety and *incompatibility* of the physical

images whereby the doom of the wicked is described would almost seem purposely intended to prevent any such literalism. Outer darkness, a lake of fire, cutting asunder, and then receiving one's "portion," drinking the wine of wrath, undying worms, cannot all be literal, for they cannot go together; but they can all shadow forth something terrific. Just the same reason (and no more) existed for taking them literally, as for understanding heaven as a feast, a wedding, a supping with Abraham, and the like, — an error which no one commits. These images all *represent* great realities, but are not the realities. This is now universally admitted.

But there is, meanwhile, a growing tendency to represent all future punishment as consisting *merely* in the natural consequences of sin. Yet neither Scripture nor reason sustains this opinion, unless among the natural influences we include the nature of God himself.

The Scripture steadily ascribes this punishment to God's agency, both in general and in detail. The constant tenor of its teachings may be summed up in its assertion that "it is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God." Thus (Rom. ii. 6) "God *will render* to every man according to his deeds;" to the wicked there shall be (verses. 8, 9) "indignation and wrath, tribulation and anguish;" that is, as the words mean, the inner displeasure of God ("indignation") and its outward expression ("wrath"), an outer pressure upon the sinner ("tribulation"), and a correspondent suffering ("anguish").

There is nothing to prevent the belief, that God will proceed both by natural consequences and by more direct inflictions, even as punishment takes place in this life. The two things are entirely compatible, and seem to be implied in the sacred Word. The same Scriptures which affirm that "evil shall slay the wicked," and that "sin when it is finished bringeth forth death," also declare that "it is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God," and that "our God is a consuming fire."

It is not difficult for the thoughtful observer of human life to see how even *sin left to itself*, and with all hinderances and present alleviations removed, must work out misery. We need not speak of vice and crime, for their ultimate and often terrible retribution is proverbial. But simple selfishness contains the germs of unlimited wrong and woe, as is proved through all history and society, from the petty selfishness that in its humble sphere works out perpetual annoyance without and within, up to the stupendous career of the great emperor who carried desolation into all the homes of Europe, and dragged out the remainder of his own life in the bitterness of disappointment and complaint. So, too, the unsatisfied desires and baffled strivings of the heart are capable of most exquisite misery. The fact is recorded everywhere, in the disappointed ambitions, the wounded prides, the writhings of the impoverished rich and of the struggling poor, the fierce rivalries, bickerings, and jealousies throughout civil and social life, the blasted hopes of every kind, that leave such an ever-increasing

multitude of souls heartsick and disgusted with life ; from the Wolseys and Charles Fifths down to the poor creatures that rush into suicide, or that live in darkness and despair. The torture of the malignant passions, jealousy, hatred, and revenge, when once fanned into flame, it has taken the world's master artists to delineate. The wreck of human intimacies and affections that sin is making all the time, on a gigantic scale, between the nearest and the dearest neighbors and friends, parents and children, husbands and wives, are sad prophecies of what it can do when it "is finished." The pangs of remorse, when its time has fully come, have required a Dickens or a Shakespeare to depict, in the villain Sykes or the Lady Macbeth ; while yet the Christian minister has not seldom seen the long-slumbering conscience so thoroughly awakened as to bear a testimony equally terrible against the great central, fundamental guilt of rejecting the holy and the loving God. Philanthropists have even deemed it needful to protest against the cruelty of shutting up the criminal alone with himself for years together in solitary confinement, as a punishment greater than human nature can bear.

Let, now, all these appalling forces set in at last finally and forever ; every grasping desire to rage on without a possibility of gratification ; selfishness itself defeated in all its schemes ; concealment, respect, self-respect, and hope extinguished together ; the sweet sympathies and intimacies of life crushed out by evil passions that even here fought hard against them, and often overcame ; the malign emotions, no

longer held back by interest and hope, now bursting forth ; the soul made at length to see the unspeakable wrong of contending against God, the hopelessness of the struggle, and the stupendous folly of its own choice ; let all the hinderances, restraints, and alleviations of this life be forever withdrawn, — the pleasures of sense in all their various forms, the scenes of amusement hallowed or unhallowed, the cares and callings of life, the office and shop and workshop, all the ambitions, excitements, schemes, and expectations that buoyed up the spirits, and cheered on the struggles, — let these inevitable changes come, and it is not difficult to comprehend that the intensest figures of God's word but shadow forth the true penalty of sin. "How terrible is sin," said Channing, "hereafter to work its own misery ! and how false and dangerous it is to argue, from the present power of escaping its consequences, that you can escape them forever !"

But, besides all these natural and appointed laws, the Scripture asserts, as we have seen, some direct agency of God. And reason would confirm the interpretation. For, as God is true to himself, he must entertain displeasure towards sin. As he is also true to himself, he must in some way express that displeasure. That *expression*, in whatever mode, must constitute a positive mighty *pressure* upon the sinful soul.

The same remarkable trial to which reference has already been made illustrates this subject well. The influence which has driven the plaintiff and his prin-

cial witness to their extraordinary series of procedures, was, as they allege, the simple, but prodigious and terrible, *pressure* of human public sentiment. The thing, too, which the defendant most shrinks from, and shudders at, is not a money penalty, but the awful stress of that same public sentiment, threatening him with ruin and "despair."

If, now, the calm but deliberate condemnation of men can breed such dismay, what are the resources of our offended God?

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## CONCLUSION.

THIS discussion has been compressed within the briefest possible compass. It is but an outline of a large theme. But it may serve to indicate the basis on which the evangelical churches rest their views of this sad subject. We have endeavored to meet the several conditions specified in the first article, as constituting a clear case.

It has been shown that the proof of this doctrine, —

1. Does not rest upon forced or strained constructions, but upon declarations obvious to “plain people,” and taken in accordance with the common laws and usages of speech.

2. It is found not in one or two, but in repeated and numerous assertions.

3. It is expressed not alone in some one mode of speech or phraseology, but in several and diverse modes of statement.

4. It rests upon direct and principal utterances in which this topic constitutes a chief matter in hand.

5. It is sustained also by the general implications and concurrent tenor of the system of truth in which it is found.

6. It is opposed by no passages of Scripture which do not admit of an easy explanation without conflicting with this doctrine ; and, —

7. It encounters no objection of principle which does not lie equally against the manifest order of things in the present course of nature.

And now we may confidently ask whether stronger positive evidence can be found in the Scriptures for any other doctrine whatever, attended with a feebler show of adverse declarations within, or a more baseless array of objections without, the sacred volume. What more can be asked in the line of evidence? How can a believer in the veracity of God's word — yea, in the truth of the Redeemer — deny or question this teaching?

This being the case, those who honestly rest their faith upon the Scriptures will undoubtedly continue to receive this solemn truth, as the Church has always done, notwithstanding all passionate declamations against it. Those who hold that "the New Testament is not given as a full and accurate theological chart for human thought," or who blindly insist that this teaching is "impossible" and "cannot be proved," will probably maintain another gospel on this matter, and on others also. But, though they should even prefer atheism to acceptance of the doctrine of eternal punishment, they will find no relief from the fundamental difficulties till they dispense not only with God, but with the actual course and tendency of human events.

Meanwhile, those who choose to submit to God in faith and love and true obedience will have no reason to fear, or wrangle against, this momentous fact in God's government. It has to them no more of terror or

